

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

SOUTHEAST TISSUE RECYCLE PAPER MILL

Proposed Action and Need

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes the following actions along the left bank of Pickwick Reservoir at about Tennessee River mile (TRM) 242 in Colbert County, Alabama:

- Grant approval for the Shoals Economic Development Authority (SEDA) to sell approximately 820 acres of the Barton Riverfront Industrial Park site to Southeast Tissue Company LLC (Southeast Tissue) for construction and operation of a paper mill recycling waste paper into tissue and other paper products,
- Grant approval to Southeast Tissue under Public Law 87-852 for a 100 foot-wide permanent easement across TVA property for industrial water intake and discharge lines, along with an additional 50 foot wide temporary construction easement,
- Grant approval to Southeast Tissue under Section 26a of the TVA Act for the proposed mill's raw water intake and wastewater outfall structures extending into the navigation channel of the reservoir at approximately mile TRM 241.8, and
- Grant approval to SEDA under Section 26a of the TVA Act for a crossing of Whitley Branch, a small perennial stream about two miles south of the site, by the access road to the site.

In addition, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) proposes to issue individual permits to Southeast Tissue for the intake and outfall under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the River and Harbors Act and a nationwide Section 404 permit to SEDA for the crossing of Whitley Branch.

The purposes of these actions are to enable Southeast Tissue to construct additional paper manufacturing capacity over the next 10-15 years to support its current sales plan and to cooperate with SEDA to benefit the economy of the Shoals area. In recent years the area has suffered the loss of numerous high-wage jobs as several large manufacturing companies have reduced staff or closed. The jobs provided by Southeast Tissue would help offset these losses.

Alternatives

TVA has considered two alternatives, with four sub-alternatives:

No Action Alternative – Under this alternative, TVA and the USACE would not issue the approvals or permits. Southeast Tissue would not build and operate its proposed facility in the Barton Riverfront Industrial Park.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under this alternative, TVA would issue the approvals and permits as requested with mitigation as necessary to reduce impacts. Southeast

Tissue would build and operate its proposed facility in the Barton Riverfront Industrial Park.

Sub-Alternatives for Landfill Disposal for Deinking Sludge – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the sludge produced in deinking the waste paper would have to be placed in a landfill. This landfill could be on-site (Landfill Sub-Alternative A) or the waste could be taken to an existing landfill off-site (Landfill Sub-Alternative B).

Sub-Alternatives for Location of Intake and Outfall Structures – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, Southeast Tissue would need an intake in Pickwick Reservoir for process water and an outfall for disposal of treated wastewater. Two locations are under consideration: at approximately TRM 241.71 (Outfall Sub-Alternative 1) and further upstream at approximately TRM 241.84 (Outfall Sub-Alternative 2).

Preferred Alternative – TVA has chosen the proposed action alternative with Outfall Sub-Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative would achieve the business and economic development purposes of the proposed action, and the discharge plume from Outfall Sub-Alternative 2 would be farther from the swimming and fishing area at Mulberry Creek. TVA does not have a preference for a Landfill Sub-Alternative. The impact from both Landfill Sub-Alternatives would be insignificant.

Impact Assessment

The No Action Alternative would result in no net effect on the environment because existing conditions would not be expected to change. Adverse socioeconomic conditions in the area because of the high unemployment rates of Colbert and Lauderdale Counties would not be expected to improve under continued agricultural use of the proposed site. In turn, the per capita income and poverty levels would not be expected to improve.

The Preferred Alternative would have minor impacts on surface water quality of Pickwick Reservoir from sediment generated during construction of the intake and outfall, the discharge of treated process wastewater, and storm water runoff. Plant design and procedures to prevent and control spills of on-site chemicals would make any impacts to surface water unlikely. Chemicals in the wastewater discharge are not expected to significantly affect the quality of sediment in the bed of the reservoir. Piping crossing the floodplain of the reservoir would be buried so that there would be no impact on flooding. A small area of riparian wetlands along the reservoir would be temporarily affected by construction for the pipelines. Under Landfill Sub-Alternative A, groundwater at the site would not be significantly affected because the on-site landfill would meet state industrial standards, and leachate would be collected for treatment. Under Landfill Sub-Alternative B, use of the existing landfill would also have insignificant impact because that landfill meets the state standards.

Construction of the facility would have minor temporary impacts on air quality. The facility would limit operational emissions to levels below the threshold for triggering prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) regulations; therefore, operational impacts on air quality would be insignificant. Because the facility would be a recycle mill and not a kraft pulping mill, odorous emissions would be negligible.

Some forest and agricultural fields would be impacted by construction, but the losses would have insignificant effect on wildlife. Lighting of the operating facility would also be designed and operated to have insignificant impacts on wildlife. Small amounts of

reservoir bottom substrate would be removed and some sediment would be generated by construction of the intake and outfall. The small volume of water withdrawn would not have a detectable entrainment or impingement effect on aquatic life in the river. The wastewater discharge would not exceed any ecological or human health criteria and would have only a small effect on overall nutrient and chlorophyll levels of the reservoir. The impacts on aquatic ecology would be insignificant. TVA has concluded that there would be no adverse effect on any species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with this determination. There would also be no impacts to state-listed species.

Impacts on land use would be negligible because the site has already been committed to industrial use. Impacts on employment and income would be beneficial. Impacts on population would be very slight and there would be no disproportionate impacts on minority or low income populations. Impacts on infrastructure and community services would be within current and planned capacities and availabilities. Impacts on commercial river navigation as well as water-based recreation would be insignificant.

Construction of the facility would temporarily and episodically increase ambient noise levels. Operational noise would generally be inside a building, and the aerators and pumps would produce only low noise levels not audible over background at nearby residences. Truck and rail traffic during operation would be noticeable to some residents near the proposed access road and rail spur but would be insignificant primarily due to concentration of the truck and rail traffic during the day.

The property contains no sites listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and impacts to the nearby Gilbert House and cemetery would be avoided through the use of development and construction management plans. TVA has concluded that there would be no effects on historic properties and the Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer has concurred with this determination.

Construction activity and the built facilities would be visible from a number of off-site locations. Landscaping, exterior colors of structures analogous to the existing shoreline, and limitations on lighting would lessen impacts.

Mitigation

The following mitigation measures were identified as necessary to ensure that the environmental impacts of TVA's preferred alternative are insignificant:

- To protect the visual setting of the Gilbert House the construction contract and specifications for the access road would contain provisions for protection of existing trees around the Gilbert House where removal would not be needed for road construction, and provisions for planting bushes along the cut of the access road into the hill where the Gilbert House is located. TVA would review the contract and specifications before construction of the road and approve them if the provisions were adequate. The TVA letter to SEDA approving the sale of the 820 acres to Southeast Tissue would contain these provisions for protecting the visual setting of the Gilbert house.
- To protect the cemetery south of the site of the proposed mill the construction contract and specifications for the mill facilities would include provisions that the cemetery would be avoided. TVA would review the contract and specifications before construction and approve them if the protective measures were adequate. The TVA letter to SEDA approving

the sale of the 820 acres to Southeast Tissue would contain a requirement that these provisions be included in the deed of sale of the property.

- To avoid adverse contrast with the surrounding bluffs and shoreline rock formations, TVA would require that exterior finish of the intake structure building be analogous in color to the existing shoreline. This requirement would be a provision of the permanent easement granted by TVA to Southeast Tissue under PL87-852.

Conclusion and Findings

The Final Environmental Assessment prepared for this project concludes that the selection of TVA's preferred alternative, as well as either of the landfill sub-alternatives, would not result in a significant impact to the environment. This conclusion takes into account the implementation of the mitigation measures listed above. Accordingly, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

Original signed by

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Date